

Google: History of the Office of OSD: the McNamara Ascendency: by Lawrence S. Kaplan, Doris M. Condit, Ronald Dean Landa, Edward J. Drea, Robert J. Watson, Richard M. Leighton, Alfred Goldberg, Steven L. Rearden

Taylor, *Uncertain Trumpet*, 1959: vs. massive retaliation; strategic force simply for deterring nuclear war or fighting it, a "few hundred warheads." "Flexible response." Came to be known as finite deterrence. (See Burke, Navy)

JFK campaigned against massive retaliation. (see me!) early crises reinforced this. (Berlin?) He increased Army budget. Conventional forces became more effective than at any time since ending of Korea; this may have influenced decision to escalate in Vietnam. (!) Also, "nuclear plenty" in tactical weapons encouraged "flexibility."

European allies saw "flexible response," emphasis on improving conventional capabilities and raising nuclear threshold [though, to a level the SU could easily overmatch wrt Berlin!] as expensive and dangerous. Could tempt SU to engage in conventional war without fear of sudden escalation. They had visions of WWI and WWII; and of being the battleground (with tactical weapons) while SU and US were immune [a real possibility: perhaps less deterrent to SU [and US, wrt preemptive surrender!] though no more destructive of Europe than Ike's GW.

(Unless tactical weapons based in SU, IRBMs, were off-limits to US forces! I don't recall this being discussed, but it might have been in European minds.)

Given these possibilities, "the European NATO nations had **good reasons** to cling to the deterrent threat of nuclear weapons at the lowest possible threshold as the best strategy." 294

Despite support for flexible response in OSD and Taylor, the JCS were skeptical. The Air Force had been guided by massive retaliation, which also gave it primacy. The Army stood to benefit, but was uncertain about its ability to provide adequate conventional defense. The Navy was worried about the effect of Air force and Army contributions on their need for carriers. And their status. All were apprehensive that the new doctrine would give increased authority and control by SecDef over strategic planning and forces.

Lack of firm knowledge of enemy capabilities and intentions made all strategies suspect and subject to change with new information or in combat. All were theories that advocates hoped would never be put to test. [counterforce: limited to military targets. Negotiating pauses: where did this come from?]

Dick Neustadt, in transition, had advised against a BNSP, as limiting president's freedom of choice and encouraging JCS to press their pet projects. Nitze was for it. Gave job to hsr (me and WWK) and Gilpatric circulated (my) draft—calling for controlled and discriminating response-- on May 5 to services for comment (they were dubious, preferring "simplicity" to options ) Reserve force, withholding

attacks on industrial, urban and control centers. ISA version of BNSP died; but kept an early death. Kept alive by WWR until 1963; a draft in December 1961 and again in May 7, 1962 (one I worked on), 166 pages long. JCS didn't like deemphasis on nuclear forces, emphasis on conventional; Taylor wanted MLF and modernization of NATO forces, and more on tactical nuclear weapons. Col. Bill Smith, Taylor aide, saw decline in JCS influence, buildup of a civilian-military general staff in OSD.

On Jan. 17 1963, JFK rescinded last Ike BNSP, and said future guidance would come from existing policy statements, class. And unclassified, of president and NSC. McNamara said guidance for SIOP would come from his posture statements to the president. WWR regarded his continued BNSP efforts as dead at the Pentagon. JCS, too, accepted that face-to-face meetings and exchange of memos with SecDef provided sufficient guidance. (Though they asked for more guidance on strategic targeting, and on desired force levels in NATO).

Missile gap was, after all, a Democratic campaign issue. Accepting the myth could undermine the case for flexible response. [? Cut both ways.] Sputnik, ICBM test of 1957, boasts, May Day parades, culminated in K's announcement on January 27, 1959, that SU was in mass production of ICBMs. (Lie? Or reference to SS-7's, R-16, not due until 1963?) McElroy spoke in secret briefing to Congress earlier, on Jan. 16, of a gap of 100 missiles in 1960 (though he said that 300 was an exaggeration); Ike on 28 January spoke of "closing the gap."

JFK warned of gap, growing larger and larger, in August 1960 and afterwards, and called for crash missile effort and reappraisal of whole defense organization. First SOTU speech spoke of issue and need for reappraisal. [Yes—but in opposite direction!]

On Feb. 6 in backgrounder, McNamara said "if there was a gap, it was in our favor." [I don't think that he believed it was as great in our favor as it was; there's no evidence in record on this, either way.] Official statements followed that studies had yet reached no conclusion (true) and JFK said he hoped no gap would be found. In the same backgrounder, he emphasized that the US was ahead, considering its bombers, there was no "destructive gap" or "deterrent gap", the same point Gates had made in 1960 [again, not reflecting that there was such a gap, enormously in our favor]. In April he told congress that the Soviets might be slightly ahead in missiles until 1963 (!) but that by end of 1963 we would be ahead. In other words, he was interpreted, unlike Gates, in denying that there was a missile gap in SU favor (though he was acknowledging it!) whereas Gates was understood to say that there was.

In May and August 1960, intell estimates said that production rates for SU ICBMs were very hard to estimate—no sites other than test sites had been identified--. In Sept. 1961, dues to SAMOS (Corona? Discoverer?) 10-25 ICBM sites and 250-300 MRBM sites. It had been Air Force estimates that had been leaked to congress and



Dems, not the CIA estimates. May 1959, intell had predicted possibly 500 ICBMs by 1962.

Why did McNamara continue in missile buildup after new estimate? Authors discount political or service pressures (wrong?) They say he took seriously that SU lag was temporary and that there would be a buildup later [would this have happened without C-II and loss of JFK and K?] and CIA estimate that ICBMs had "emboldened the Soviets to challenge the West on a vital issue like Berlin" and elsewhere. [But was this based on his bluffs, or on small force? Later buildup would not give any superiority: though Strauss in December 1961 was raising issue whether SU parity in missiles would lower US commitment to Europe, raising need for French-German control.]

Acheson report to NATO in April 1961 suggested giving first priority to sub-nuclear contingencies, conventional capability, in order to "halt soviet advances...for a period sufficient for them to appreciate the wider risks of the course on which they were embarked." [origins of "negotiating pause"?] Europeans were unimpressed by JFK presentation to Military Committee in april 10 and Lemnitzer: American strategic forces should be sufficiently invulnerable to absorb (sic) an initial Soviet nuclear attack and retaliate...

[this is still missile gap thinking! RAND]

JCS opposed. Allies either ignored call for increased conventional force, or as UK did, actually decreased forces. Strauss visited Norstad and said there "should be no clear threshold beneath which conventional force may be employed." {AMBIGUITY}

Nitze to SecGen Stikker: We should be prepared for lesser things; the alternative [to what?] is accommodation to Russian intentions, , e.g., a free city of Berlin, which is not acceptable to Europe."